Interview with Haakon Lie

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project Labor Series

HAAKON LIE

Interviewer: Morris Weisz

Initial interview date: March 1, 1994

Q: This is Morris Weisz; today is March 1, 1994, and I am interviewing my good friend Haakon Lie, former Secretary General of the Norwegian Labor Party, for the Labor Diplomacy Oral History Project. Please begin by giving us some historical background on the Norwegian perspective of the United States. What I want to get on tape is just this brief introduction of yourself and your recent writings and what you are doing on Furuseth and then go into the history.

LIE: Norwegian seaman played a major role in the establishment in 1885 of the Seamen's Union of the Pacific (SUP), which still functions today. This role was possible due to the fact that they manned the ships engaged in the coastal traffic on the West Coast which were nicknamed the “Scandinavian Navy.” They brought timber from Oregon and Washington down to San Diego, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, when these cities were being built up. You had to handle timber where there were no quays. You had to take the timber out of the water into the ship. It was a difficult job. The Norwegians had been trained for that. The Norwegian merchant marine was the third largest in the world in the 1870s and 1880s. Originally, it was built up for the transport of timber from Norway, Sweden, and the Baltic States to England, Holland, Belgium, and France. That was its

specialty. No one could compete with them. There were no ethnic cleavages on board these American ships operating on the West Coast. They were manned by Scandinavians, the skipper, the mate, the boys, so crews could operate as a group of people who stood together as landsmen. The Seamen's Union of the Pacific could build on that nucleus and survived while all the maritime unions on the East Coast vanished. There you had the Spanish in the boiler room and the Negroes in the galley and the Anglo-Saxons and the Scandinavians on the deck, and they were fighting with each other.

Q: But notice how parallel it is to the garment workers where they had this nucleus of people who came from the same little Jewish groups and they formed the garment industry.

LIE: So, there you are. That was the experience on this side of the Atlantic. So now the question is what did they bring back to Norway. That is a very interesting question. At least twenty percent of those who went over to America returned. We always have the picture of people leaving the old country, because there was starvation; there were no jobs; there were no farms to till. I think a number of those people were also driven by other forces. Our youth today want to go out “to see the world.” They pack their rucksacks and buy a rail ticket that takes them all over Europe. They hitchhike over Europe. The young boys of the last century also wanted to see the world. So many of them went to America to see and learn, and they returned. To buy a ticket back from New York to Norway cost only $15, because the immigration ships went back empty. The ships were happy to have some paying customers. So they came back, and among them were some of the old-time Norwegian labor leaders. You have Johan Nygaardsvold, who was Prime Minister of Norway from 1935 to 1945. He was a lumber jack; then he was a construction worker on the railroads on the West Coast; there he met the I.W.W. (Industrial Workers of the World) known as the Wobblies. And then we have of course the grand old man of the Norwegian Labor Party, Martin Tranmael. He was trained in the trade unions in Los Angeles. He attended all the meetings, all the evening classes of the Socialist Party, and when he finally went back to Norway in 1905, he went via Chicago and participated as a

representative of the Building Workers Union in the convention in which the I.W.W. was established. That was in September 1905, and by Christmas-time he was back in Norway, preaching the gospel of industrial unionism and organizing in opposition along syndicalist-socialist lines. They took over the trade unions. They took over the Labor Party. They were the left-wingers, who also unfortunately brought us into the Comintern. Tranmael left America with a certain contempt for the AFL (American Federation of Labor), although I think contempt may be too strong a word. The Wobblies were in opposition to the AFL. The AFL was not class-conscious; it was not politically-conscious.

So when I came to America in 1944, I looked for support from the CIO (Congress of Industrial Organizations), not the AFL. It is very important for understanding the attitude of the Norwegian labor movement towards the American movement to understand that there was a biased picture of the American labor movement in the 1920s and 1930s. There were no contacts. The AFL was of course not in the international federation at that time. I was then the secretary of the Workers' Education Association. We had close contacts with the British workers' association, but our only contact with America was with the Brookwood Labor College in New York. We started sending students to Brookwood. There was Natvig Pedersen. I mention his name because he was later Speaker in the Parliament and for years a member of the Nobel Peace Prize Committee. There was Konrad Knutsen. He was a member of our Parliament for years. Later he was host for Leon Trotsky when Trotsky came to Norway in the middle 1930s. There was also contact with Harry Laidler of the League for Industrial Democracy. He too was on the left side of the political spectrum.

Q: But Brookwood also had an opposition within it. Some of the people, the Musteites, wanted to maintain the relationship with the Wobblies and the left wing, but some of them began to have contacts with the old AFL crowd. They were in the minority in Brookwood.

LIE: Anyway, I only wanted you to see the picture we Norwegians had of American labor; it was a colored picture.

Q: You never went to Brookwood?

LIE: Oh, no. It wasn't only the Norwegian Labor Party and labor movement with its special traits of radicalism that had this picture of American labor. One of the leading Swedish trade unionists, Ragnar Casparson, described in his memoirs his attempt to get in touch with the American labor movement. He was on his way to Mexico City for an ILO [International Labor Organization] conference and decided to go back via Washington and look up AFL President William Green. He wrote in his memoirs that he met William Green in the elevator between the first and the ninth floors. That was all. So you see, to the Scandinavians the American labor movement was something distant and foreign. Only one Norwegian union had contact with American workers — the Norwegian Seamen's Union. It landed in a year-long fight with the Communist-led National Maritime Union. Whether Joe Curran was a Communist or not, he was a stooge in their hands at least.

Q: Well he admitted to being Communist later on.

LIE: Did he? Anyway when he retired, they gave him a million dollars and a yacht. The N.M.U. organized what they called the Scandinavian Seamen's Clubs. They were Communist-led and they operated amongst the Norwegian seamen unemployed in New York and living in these shanty towns or Hoovervilles in Baltimore, New York, or New Orleans. They established small cafes where the seamen could get a warm cup of coffee, and they created a hell of a turmoil inside the Norwegian merchant marine, which was still one of the biggest in the world and was engaged in trade on the coasts of America. That reached its climax then in 1940, when they tried to sabotage the Norwegian tanker fleet bringing gasoline to Britain during the Battle of Britain.

Q: At the time of the. . .

LIE: The Nazi-Soviet pact. “The war was an imperialistic war. It was immaterial to the Norwegian seamen whether a Quisling was in power in Oslo or a labor government.” That was the propaganda. So, it was not a pretty picture when you look back.

Then we were at war, and in April 1940 the Germans took over. That first year between April 1940 and the German attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941 was as though the Germans had won the war. The German army was in control in Norway. In Norway the worst Nazis were kept under control by the generals. They didn't want any fights going on in Norway. But after June 1941 the whole nature of the German occupation changed. Then the Army knew the war would last for a long time and the Nazis decided they had to clamp down. Norway was strategically an important country. Hitler believed that the invasion of Europe would come through the north, so he massed troops in Norway. At the end of the war there were 360,000 German soldiers in Norway to defend what he called “Fortress Norway,” even though he needed every division on the Eastern Front. In September 1941 when strikes broke out, they clamped down. Then we had the first executions. They rounded up 300 to 400 of what we would call the top leadership echelon in the Labor Party and the unions. I got out. The chairman and the vice chairman of the L.O., (the Norwegian Federation of Labor), also got out. We went to Sweden.

Q: Were you then an official of the party?

LIE: I was then in charge of workers' education. That was partly financed by the unions, partly by the Party, and the top officials from both served on the steering committee. There was a Norwegian government in exile in London, but it was the British Government that asked us leaders of the Norwegian labor movement to come over to Britain. Hugh Dalton, who was later Finance Minister in the Attlee government, was in charge of what was called “The Special Operations Executive.” It was comparable to the O.S.S. (U.S. Office of Strategic Services)

Q: In the Government?

LIE: In the British Government.

Q: They had a coalition government.

LIE: Yes, the British formed a coalition government in May 1940. Dalton was in the Cabinet, and he was in charge of operations behind the enemy's lines. So the British wanted us in London. They brought over labor leaders from various countries to work with them in conducting activities in the occupied areas. We went there in 1942. 1942 was an awful year in Norway. Only setbacks and so many arrests. More people were deported to Germany; the Jews were sent to Germany. Our activities outside Norway were based on the Seamen's Union. It had 30,000 members outside Norway. So we could have based our activities on the Seamen's Union, but we felt it was too much to ask. There was no use talking to the British; the T.U.C. had a smaller income in 1939 than the Norwegian trade union federation. And we didn't want to ask the Swedes for help. They had let us down. So I went to America for help. I felt so unhappy. What could I do?

Q: But you knew about the United States. You had relatives who had gone there.

LIE: I got a letter from them every Christmas. No, I knew nothing about America. I went there alone on a small, fast Norwegian fruit boat. It brought bacon at that time, not fruit, from America to Britain, and went back empty. I was the only passenger. Every day at 12 o'clock we were told by radio where to go and how to avoid the German submarines. We went up to Iceland and down to the Gulf of Mexico and then up along the coast. In three weeks we were in New York. I shall never forget my arrival there. I had to go through Immigration. The official asked me, “Where have you been during the last five years?” Well, I had been twice in Russia. I had been in Spain during the civil war. They must have thought that I was a Communist. I think the process took two or three hours. Then he finally asked me, “Are you pro-Allied?” And I said, “Yes, I am.” He said, “Okay.” So I got ashore and then went to the Seamen's Union headquarters in Brooklyn at 156 Montegue Street. I tried to find my way around. I went to Harry Laidler.

Q: But you knew English?

LIE: Yes, I had been already one year in England and could speak fairly well.

Q: Did you have a letter to take to Harry Laidler?

LIE: No

Q: Just went there. 112 East 19th Street.

LIE: And I met Bjarne Braat#y, who had been a co-worker with Friedrich Adler in the Socialist International. Bjarne was the son of a Norwegian clergyman and was born in America, so he was an American citizen. Now he was in charge of the Norwegian Section of the Office of War Information. So there I had two contacts immediately in America. Both of them said, “Haakon, there is no use contacting the AFL and the CIO. Don't start there. Start with the Jewish Labor Committee.” And that is where I began! I got in touch with Jacob Pat, who was then the secretary. We became very good friends. And Adolph Held. Those were the two who really ran the Jewish Labor Committee.

Q: They supplied some funds, but Held was the man.

LIE: I think Dubinsky was the boss. Jacob Pat was the organizer. He was a solid, very good man. We started working together. He sent me out to meetings, and it turned out that I was a good speaker not only at the Jewish Labor Committee meetings, but at synagogues and so forth.

Q: I should interrupt you to tell you that I had an appointment for yesterday with Will Stern of the Jewish Labor Committee. I had an appointment to see him because he has been helpful to this project. I telephoned him and said, “I have an opportunity to interview somebody next week. I have to call off our luncheon.” I said, “You will be interested to know that I am interviewing Haakon Lie, who gives a whole lot of credit to the Jewish

Labor Committee for. . .” He said, “Haakon Lie addressed our convention. . .” He gave me a long story. So as a result of that I was able to excuse myself from a lunch yesterday. He wanted me to send you his best regards. He was a young man at the time. He is now about 80. He remembers your addressing the convention of the Jewish Labor Committee in the late 1940s.

LIE: Anyway, from there I went to see Monroe Sweetland, who was a former assistant to Harry Laidler in the League for Industrial Democracy and who was then in the CIO. Monroe Sweetland ran the CIO War Relief Committee. On the AFL side, there was Labor's League for Human Rights. There you had Matthew Woll at the top, but the men and women working there were not actually labor people.

Q: They weren't trade unionists. They were politicos.

LIE: The CIO was very much interested in me when it came to work in the South. In the South, the CIO was considered somewhat un-American. Now the CIO could bring down this blue-eyed, blond Norwegian. A white man!

Q: Not a Jewish New Yorker. That's the point!

LIE: So I was talking to the Elks and the Chambers of Commerce and the Rotary Clubs under the auspices of the CIO. .

Q: Monroe Sweetland once told me that if he had been, like most of his comrades, Jewish, he never would have been able to do that work in that period, and that the advantage of not being Jewish was great for his work down there in the South.

LIE: At that time, you had the film “The Moon is Down,” describing Norwegians as heroes. The Norwegians were viewed as saints. Anyway, we got — and mind you this was in 1943, 1944, 1945 — $625,000 for use in occupied Norway. Today you can multiply that by perhaps 15 to get the current value. At that time it was a large amount of money. And

the money went then to Stockholm to Martin Tranmael, who was in charge of American relief. We dubbed it, “American labor relief for Norway.” Martin had very good connections with the Swedish Government, not so much with the Prime Minister as with Erlander and the Social Affairs Minister, Gustav M#ller. Tranmael got the full support of the Swedish Government. They were willing to supply him with rationed goods, whatever it was, to go into Norway. The O.S.S. gave the green light for the transport of money, food, medicine, boots, whatever was needed. We bought boats to go from the west coast of Sweden into Norway. We bought trucks and brought foodstuff, 150 tons of food, 10,000 packages of food going partly to Norway and partly into the concentration camps in Germany to the prisoners there. $110,000 in cash went to the families of people in the concentration camps.

Q: How did you get the money into the concentration camps?

LIE: That was. . .

Q: A secret operation?

LIE: No! When the Germans got dollars, hard currency, they were willing to sell some goods to the prisoners in the camps. “American Labor Relief” was described in American newspapers as the best operation behind the enemy's lines. That was of course so, because we had a common border with Sweden. The French got more money, but they couldn't do what we did. So among the occupied countries Norway stood number two in cash, but when it came to operations Norway was by far the best. I think it is now hard to understand what it meant to the movement. We understood very well what it meant as a boost for the people who received help. We Norwegians are not alone. The Americans are coming. The Americans are coming. It also meant something to the underground organization to have all these things coming in. You had to distribute it, and go to the families. It is a network constantly working in a positive sense. Not only complaining and

condemning the damned Germans. No. It is practical, useful work for the labor movement organizationally. To be engaged in these activities meant something.

Q: All the time the Nazis were still occupying Norway?

LIE: Yes. The Norwegian underground took out — and that's nearly impossible to understand — they took out nearly 10,000 persons on special routes from Norway through the forests and into Sweden, and very few were caught, because the Germans didn't like to operate in the forests.

After the end of the war in 1945, the Labor Party gained a majority of one in the Norwegian Parliament. That was all. The Communists were very strong. Organizationally, they had the second biggest party in the country.

Q: In spite of the history of the pact?

LIE: That was absolutely forgotten. That was forgotten, and there was the prestige of the Soviet Red Army. “The Red Army had done the fighting, the British and the Americans the waiting.” The circulation of the Communist paper in Oslo before the war was 1,500, or something like that, and now it was 100,000. The Communists controlled all the shipyards. They were very strong in metals, iron, chemicals, building, logging and of course very strong along the Russian border up north. So then the fight started for control of the unions and the labor federation. It built up to a climax with the fight over the Marshall Plan and over NATO membership.

Well, now let's go back to the question of contact with the Americans. Before the war there had been absolutely no contact between the Norwegian labor movement and the American Embassy. There is no doubt about that. The ambassador at that time was a woman appointed by President Roosevelt. I think she was the very first woman ambassador. Her name was Harriman. She wrote a book after the war when she went back to America. She called it Mission to the North. What I recall is her description of

Norwegian homes. She said that she never went into a Norwegian home without finding beautiful paintings on the walls and libraries. She probably had been the guest of ship-owners.

In 1945 you had as Ambassador a journalist from upstate New York, Lithgow Osborne. He had worked with President Roosevelt when Roosevelt was Governor of New York, so they were friends. He was a good Democrat. Then Labor Attach# Walter Galenson came in early June or maybe May. He was supposed to go to Moscow, but they turned him down. The Press Attach# was Ted Olsen. He was of Norwegian extraction. He was a good social democrat, a member of the Fabian Society in England. There was Einar Haugen, who was a professor from the University of Wisconsin in Madison, also a good democrat. These Americans became our personal friends. Walter and I would talk about everything that was going on in the Norwegian labor movement and in America.

When Ambassador Osborne left, we really felt sorry. Then a multimillionaire of Norwegian ancestry became ambassador. Bay was his name. I don't remember his first name. After Ambassador Bay came Ambassador Strong. He was another multimillionaire, a Kodak millionaire. The Labor Attach#s after Galenson were Gene Martinson [1951-53], Bruce Millen [1954-58], and John Piercey [1959-63]. We became friends with them. These labor attach#s took over. The relationship to Gene and to Bruce and to John was the same as it had been to Walter. Complete confidence in each other. And I also want to add the Marshall Plan Administration. What was it called at that time?

Q: M.S.A. (Mutual Security Administration)

LIE: M.S.A. When they came in, the boss was John Gross. He came from the Machinists Union. And his chief assistant, an economist, was a woman, Alice Bourneuf. She wrote a book afterwards that she called, A Planned Revival. It was an account of the planned economy of the Labor Party in the Marshall Plan years.

Q: She was an economist for the Marshall Plan in Norway?

LIE: Yes. And there was Mark Leiserson.

Q: Who was the son of the famous University of Wisconsin economist, who was appointed by President Roosevelt to various top jobs in New Deal labor agencies.

LIE: Mark wrote a book on wage policies in Norway praising the planning.

Q: But he came from the University of Wisconsin, so I guess it was not strange to him.

LIE: I guess so. These years were very important — a very stormy and difficult period for the Norwegian Labor Party and the labor movement. Five years of privation under the Nazi occupation and strict rationing until 1951. All that time you couldn't buy sugar without a ration card. Of course Poland and other countries had suffered more. But we had lost our source of foreign exchange. Before the war, our tanker fleet was the most efficient in the world. This merchant navy and our whaling ships had brought in the hard currency, but now were rusting at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean. So from that point of view we were very hard up. Then politically, the Russians were in Finnmark. They went into northern Norway and they stayed at the tip up there. The Russians were in Denmark too. After the Germans had capitulated, the Russians took over Bornholm, a big island in the south of the Baltic Sea.

Q: Oh, by ship around Murmansk? Is that how they got in there?

LIE: No. When it was close to the end of the war, the British and the Russians were rushing towards Denmark to occupy Denmark. The Americans, Eisenhower, let the Russians go to Berlin and Prague, but Montgomery was ordered to go to Copenhagen. The British reached the Danish border a day or two before the Russians. So Denmark was not occupied by the Russians. But then when the Germans had capitulated, the Russians rushed their troops into Bornholm. They were sent there from the Eastern Front,

which was only a few miles away from Bornholm. So there you had the Russians inside Scandinavia, and Finland. . .

Q: Inside Scandinavia from the bottom and from the top.

LIE: And Finland was under their thumb. In October 1944 just when the Russians went into Finnmark into Norway, Trygve Lie was in Moscow to negotiate with the Russians on how the civilian administration should be arranged during the Russian occupation of Norwegian territory. Everything went very well until the last night. Then at midnight Trygve Lie was called to the Kremlin to see Molotov, and Molotov told him that the Russians wanted to take over the Bear Island — That's an island south of Spitsbergen — and they wanted to have military installations on Spitsbergen. This was the first direct demand for Norwegian territory. That was in 1944. It was repeated in 1945. Q: Do you mean after May 1945 or before the end of the war?

LIE: This was before the end of the war, in 1944. It was repeated twice in 1945, when Norwegian representatives met Molotov in Paris and at the United Nations Conference in New York. The Russians were demanding to take over Bear Island and have their fortifications on Spitsbergen. So here we had this new geo-political situation with the Russians as a neighbor. Trygve Lie was Foreign Minister in 1944-45.

Q: Foreign Minister in the Exile Government?

LIE: Yes, and also in the first Labor Government established after the elections after the war. Trygve Lie was a labor lawyer always looking for a compromise which would bring the parties together. Now he advocated a new foreign policy: bridge-building between the East and the West. This was simply a return to neutrality. When Trygve Lie was picked as Secretary General for the United Nations, there was no doubt that the Norwegian situation was involved. The Russians proposed a Yugoslav as the Secretary General of the United Nations. The Americans and the British wanted a Canadian, Lester Pearson. The compromise candidate was Trygve Lie. Trygve Lie had played ball with the Russians

on the Svalbard question, and he had a good standing in the British Government. Eden and Trygve Lie were very good friends. And he had good relations with the Americans. There was no doubt about that. The only one who really tried to stop him was Ernest Bevin, another labor man.

So it was a balancing act, balancing policies, and it lasted until the Cold War really started up with Secretary of State George Marshall's speech at Harvard in June 1947, where he launched what was later called the Marshall Plan. Then we had to take a stand either for or against the plan. There was no alternative. Halvard Lange had then taken over as Foreign Minister and he tried to play his cards carefully; he advocated that the plan should be under the authority of the European Commission for Europe in the United Nations, where Gunnar Myrdal was Secretary General, and that there should be bilateral arrangements, not an overall European plan. We shouldn't divide Europe into two halves. A widening gap in foreign trade forced the government to reconsider its cautious course. In the executive committee of the Labor Party there was never any doubt but that Norway should take its place in the Western camp, but a campaign had to be launched to swing public opinion. We had to work with the American labor attach#s to get the material we needed. Among the rank and file in the Labor Party, there's no doubt that at the beginning they looked on the Marshall Plan with great suspicion. American imperialism. The Americans were trying to solve their economic problems and avoid overproduction by bringing their goods into Europe. All those stupid stories went on day after day, week after week. The Communists were more and more opposed to the Marshall Plan. The Cominform was established in the summer of 1947, when Stalin made up his mind that the plan should be crushed before it was put into operation.

Q: During the war the Comintern loosened up, but then in 1947, as a reaction to the proposed Marshall Plan, they established the Cominform.

LIE: Then a wave of strikes took place, especially in France. I looked at the newspapers of the period when I was writing one of my books. The headlines in Norway asked whether

the French Republic would fall or stand. I was at a meeting in Belgium in 1947 in the midst of this turmoil, and after the meeting, I went to Paris to follow what was going on. There I spent two or three days together with Irving Brown, the AFL representative in Europe. When the war was over, we invited the AFL and the CIO to send delegates to the first convention of the Norwegian Labor Federation. Irving Brown and Sasha Zimmerman came. The first country Irving visited when he went to Europe as a representative for the AFL was Norway. So we had very good connections with Irving, and I saw Irving in operation in those days when Paris was filled with police and they were fighting in Marseille. Railroads were derailed; people were killed. Irving worked with the old syndicalists. Force Ouvriere had not been established at that time.

In June 1947 Secretary of State George Marshall gave his speech at Harvard University, and the Cominform was established. Big strikes took place in Western Europe. We had only one in Norway. I am very proud of that. During the whole period of reconstruction stretching for five years, we had only one strike, and that was in a chemical factory where they tried to stop the production of fertilizers for French agriculture. In January 1948, Bevin launched the plan for a Western European Union, a military alliance between Britain, France, Benelux and later Italy. He didn't include Scandinavia in the Western European Union, because he was afraid that the Swedes, the Danes and the Norwegians would say no. Of course the Swedes did. They said, “At this time, we are not going to join any bloc.” The Danes said, “We are not going to join any bloc.” The Norwegian Government was silent, because it was divided. Should we break with the old tradition of neutrality? Should we join one of the blocs? Martin Tranmael and his group of strong anti-Communists went to work and got support in the local party organizations, mainly in Oslo. That was where one third of the party's membership lived. They did not openly say, “We join,” but “We support Bevin's initiatives for closer political and economic cooperation.” That moved things in the right direction. Then came the February coup in Prague. It was of course a coup in a friendly allied country and a democracy. The same day the coup took place in

Prague, the Finns got a note from Moscow in which the Soviet Union asked for a treaty of friendship and mutual assistance.

Q: The same day as the coup in Prague, which was about. . .

LIE: February 20th.

Q: I wanted to put it in terms of what you said about the same day, because so frequently things happen the same day. The 1956 Hungarian uprising was at the same time as the Suez crisis.

LIE: Then came all the rumors from Moscow, Warsaw, and Helsinki that we, the Norwegians, would get the same demand from the Soviet Union for an agreement of mutual assistance and cooperation. It was very depressing, very depressing.

Q: Because they had their troops up there too.

LIE: The troops were on the other side, but what did we have? We decided we should say, “No, no negotiations, no pact.” Then our Defense Minister Jens Chr. Hauge went to England and informed the British Government, “We are going to say no. What do you have to help us in case the Soviet forces come?” He returned empty-handed because the British didn't have anything to give. They knew that and they didn't want to make any false commitments. We turned to the Americans and asked the same question. Then we mobilized whatever we had. A silent mobilization. What we had in planes went up north. The few warships that we had all went north. Soldiers were sent north to tell the Russians, “We are going to fight. Stay away.”

Q: But this was a tactic silently agreed to, to move your people up?

LIE: That was the Government's decision. Then only the Communists voted against big appropriations for defense. I think that our maneuver really saved the Finns. They got an agreement, but it meant that Finland remained an independent country. Of course

they were under constant pressure and surveillance. Then Bevin acted. He wrote a memorandum to George Marshall outlining the steps the Russians had taken to take over half of Europe. He said, “Now we must act before Norway goes under.” The following day George Marshall and President Truman answered, “Let us start negotiations next week for the North Atlantic Treaty arrangement.” That's the story.

Q: Fascinating.

LIE: Then of course we were involved in the fight for NATO membership and the Marshall Plan. In the internal fight in the Labor Party, what happened inside the American labor movement was very important. Here of course the American labor attach#s kept us informed, and we would publish in the press how the unions took a stand for the Marshall Plan and NATO. They really did a job in that period. In the elections in 1949, the year we signed the NATO agreement, the Communists were wiped out of Parliament. They did not get a single representative. They had had 12 percent of the vote four years earlier, in 1945.

We were talking earlier about contacts with the Jewish Labor Committee and how they helped us. When the war was over, they came to us. First, Jack Pat asked us for 400 Norwegian visas for members of the Jewish Socialist Bund of Poland to be used for 400 Jews to come to Norway. I went to Poland. That must have been just before Christmas 1946. I said that we were willing to accept 400 Bundists and their families. The Executive Committee of the Bund met and they decided not to accept our invitation. Bundists should not go to Norway; they should stay and fight. Later, when I made a speech at a Jewish Labor Committee meeting commemorating its 50th anniversary, I told them about the Bundists, the “impossiblists” I called them. I told them about the Executive Committee meeting where they declined to come to Norway. After the meeting a man came up to me and said, “I participated in that meeting.”

Q: Where was this speech given?

LIE: In New York at the 50th anniversary of the Jewish Labor Committee. Later the Bundists and the Jewish Labor Committee were involved in Israel, and we got involved there, too, but that is a long story.

Q: The Bundists gave up their idealist view of staying in Poland.

LIE: Yes, they went to Israel one after the other. Slowly but surely we developed a very close relationship with the Mapai (the Israeli Labor Party), with Golda Meir and David Ben-Gurion and Levi Eshkol. The Israeli Ambassador to Norway was Nathan Bar-Yaacov. He had been international secretary for the Histadrut.

Q: And a former Israeli Labor Attach# in America. That's the man I came to visit in 1965 when he was Ambassador.

LIE: Bar-Yaacov always used to say, “There are two labor parties that we can trust, the Dutch and the Norwegian Labor Party.” It was typical that when the Histadrut had its first national executive board meeting after the Sinai campaign, there were two foreign representatives present, Irving Brown and Haakon Lie. That was just after the 1956 war. We were again together in 1967 when the Six Day War broke out. The week before I got a call from Jerusalem. “You are wanted here.” So I went there and participated from the beginning to the end of the Six Day War. I was back there again in 1973 when the Yom Kippur War occurred. I tell this because this relationship between the Israeli labor movement and the Norwegian labor movement built up slowly and had had its background in New York.

Our Trade Union Federation has built up a research center to do research on living conditions. It now has an office in Moscow. It is working in the Baltic states and in Cairo, Egypt and for the United Nations. It is an internationally accepted research organization financed originally by our unions. Now it gets assignments from the United Nations to do research on living conditions in Gaza and the West Bank. Its people are good friends of

Israel, and have the confidence of the Arab Palestinians. They ask: What are you eating? What books do you have? What are your health conditions? And so forth.

Q: With no reference to how can we help you?

LIE: No. It's research. Always research. And out of this feeling of confidence and friendship came the peace talks where the Norwegians brought the Israelis and the Palestinians together, and the great ceremony on the lawn outside the White House.

Q: Norway certainly deserves a whole lot of credit for that. It arose out of the building of relationships.

LIE: The breakthrough came out of labor relationships. Most of us absolutely couldn't imagine that a breakthrough could happen.

Q: Well, as you can imagine, with what happened in the last week, the question arises how can this tragedy be overcome?

LIE: It is interesting today that the Israelis now will allow unarmed observers inside the occupied territories, and I hope that that will work for the sake of those young Israeli soldiers who have to be in that hell, shooting at Arabs and getting all the stones thrown back. They must have only one desire, to get out of it. The Israelis should have gotten out of Gaza years ago.

Q: Tragic, and the interviews of these extremist Jewish groups like the Kach group on the television the other night. Terrible!

LIE: Extremists!

Q: Well, Haakon, this has been a fascinating interview.

LIE: Anyway, this is what I wanted to say. When we get the draft transcript, my wife Minnie and I will edit it in a decent way.

Q: Well, I'll do some editing too, but while I have you here, I have to ask you some additional questions.

LIE: Of course.

(Pause)

Q: We are going to continue now, and Haakon will give us some details about his later activities.

LIE: When I left America, I swore I would never again participate in fund-raising. I hated it. I hated it. Fate would have it differently. I will start with my biggest effort. It was late fall 1950. We had established outside Oslo — I think the best word is a “school” — for children coming from north Africa and going to Israel. They stayed for three months at this camp outside Oslo. There the children were taught how to wash their hands and brush their teeth and some Hebrew. To go out there was a real joy for us. At Christmas 1949 I was out there with two of my daughters. We have pictures of the evening. One day 40 children were on their way with a Dutch KLM plane from Tunis to Oslo. It was in the afternoon and the plane did not land. We were told that it had returned to Amsterdam. Then later we were told that it had not returned. There must have been an accident. So all of us went out to search the forests around Oslo. The entire country held its breath. What had happened to all these children? The night went by. The next afternoon a lumberjack who was going into the forest found the wreck. Everybody was killed except one boy. He was brought to the hospital. Then all sorts of gifts came in including a gift from the king: chocolates and bicycles and all the rest. I said to myself, “Now, let's do something constructive with this feeling of good will.” So the following day our newspapers ran a huge headline: “We will build a living monument for the dead. We will build a village in Israel where each house

has the name of one of the victims." There were also two Israeli nurses, one Norwegian nurse, and three pilots in that plane. "Each one shall have a living monument."

When I saw the headline, I said, "Oh, Haakon! What have you done?" We were then in the midst of a crisis when it came to obtaining lumber for building houses. The Communists were printing articles saying that Norwegians were living in tents without a roof over their heads and now we were going to build a kibbutz in Israel. Then I called the Jewish Labor Committee in New York and asked, "Can you help?" "Yes," Jack Pat said. "I can help you." And I think the following day, we received $10,000. Then I called Amsterdam to the Dutch Labor Party, "Can you help?" "No," they said, "we are not willing to help." We started and we collected enough for 70 houses, a kindergarten, and a community house. We had all the required money, but we hadn't talked to the Israelis. So I had to take a plane to Tel Aviv to talk with the head of the Jewish Agency, Levi Eshkol. I was sitting there during the night, talking with Eshkol. "What can we do? What shall we do?" Then I saw Ben Gurion and Ben Gurion said, "You have had a socialist government since 1935. Norway doesn't have a single kibbutz [collective farm]. Why don't you fund a kibbutz here?" I said, "Don't talk to Norwegians about a kibbutz. But a moshav, a cooperative, okay, that's fine." So Eshkol and I decided that there should be a moshav established north of Tel Aviv and east of Netanya at the border of Jordan at that time. Okay, we built it. Today 800 people are living in that moshav. It is a nice community.

Q: Well, you said that you made a vow not to raise money. When you are raising money for yourself, that's embarrassing, but if you are raising it for a great purpose, your conscience shouldn't hurt you. You should be proud of it.

LIE: Well, when I was raising money in America, I didn't do it for myself either. That was my first big fund raising effort. Later I was sent by the International Labor Organization to Ceylon. My wife Minnie and I went down there in 1957. The idea was to establish workers' education in Ceylon. The best people to work with were the Tamils on the plantations.

They had by far the strongest and best unions, but the unions were much more what I would call a national defense organization against the Singhalese.

Q: These were the tea plantations.

LIE: Yes, the tea plantations. The Tamils were not on the rubber plantations. There you found the Singhalese. The rubber plantations were on the coast line, and the Singhalese did not want to work up there in the mountains on the tea plantations where it was cold and wet. So the whole economy was actually dependent on the Tamil contribution, and still is. Later, I think it was the beginning of the 1960s, there was a big drought in India. We had a visitor from India. What was his name? He was one of Nehru's close advisors, but then he abandoned political activities to work for cooperative farms.

Q: Jayaprakash Naryan.

LIE: Yes, that's the man. It was a very interesting visit. He came to Norway with a lawyer, a nurse, and his wife. Minnie and I were in charge of his visit. We decided that we should take him to workers' homes, not try to impress him in any way, but just to tell him what life was like in Norway. We took him to a youth camp, where there were hundreds of young Norwegians sitting like Indians on the ground and on the floor to hear him talk. When he went back he wrote a letter and said, “I have seen most of Europe, but what impressed me most was my visit to Oslo.” I remember that we visited a building for elderly people who were living there in small rooms: a small living room, a small kitchenette, and a bathroom. That was what they had. We came in; the Indians and all of us were gathered around the table; and there was an old woman, who recognized me and started attacking the Labor Party for not giving big enough pensions and so forth. Jayaprakash. . . What did they call him? Was it J.P.? They used only his initials.

Q: J. P. Naryan. Very famous. A friend of Norman Thomas.

LIE: Then J.P. asked what she was saying. I told him, and he started asking her questions, “What is your pension?” and so forth. And he ended up by saying, “But for that income two families would have a good living in Bombay.” She answered, “To hell with your Bombay! I'm living here.” He was so impressed. Then India had a drought. Was it 1966 or 1967, when you Americans were feeding millions?

Q: That was in the 1960s. And then you came to India while we were there assigned to the American Embassy in New Delhi.

LIE: J.P. appealed for help, and we went there. I discussed with the people in New Delhi what we should do, and we decided that we would bring in fertilizer and equipment for drilling wells. The Indian Government would pay in rupees for what we sent in, and they would finance the operations in Bihar, out in the countryside. We made a collection for fertilizer and got enough for several thousand tons. India paid for it in rupees and used the money in Bihar for agricultural development. That was the way it worked. I went straight to the top official in Norwegian Hydro. That's the biggest trust in Norway. When they delivered the first 3,000 tons of fertilizer, the Government decided to match Hydro. It was really a tremendous success. Then the Indian farmers started paying back, because most of the fertilizer went to places where there were good farms. That is part of the work in underdeveloped countries.

Q: You go beyond feeding them. You allow those who are able to do so, to produce food, instead of sending them food.

LIE: That's right. So they multiplied the impact of the assistance. They were very proud of that operation.

Q: Well, a few years later you came when I was there.

LIE: Then we worked with the unions if we could. We had a very good labor press in Norway and we still have some 30 local papers. I think they make up at least 20 percent of

the total circulation of newspapers in Norway. That was in part a result of my work in 1944. Then our Labor press was lying in ruins. In 1944 I got a telegram from London saying that I should buy typographical equipment for the Norwegian Labor press.

Q: This was a telegram you got while in the United States from whom?

LIE: From the headquarters of the Norwegian Labor Federation in London. They said that they had made up a list of equipment which was urgently needed when the country was liberated and we should start our Labor press again. It amounted to a total of $100,000 worth of equipment. Of course they didn't have a cent for the purchase, and I didn't have a dollar for it either. I went to Chicago and talked with various companies producing presses.

Q: Morgenthaler?

LIE: Yes, that was one of them. I found out that if we would make a down payment — I don't recall whether it was 20 or 25 percent — we would be on a priority list. We would be the first ones to receive our equipment when they started civilian production once again. Moreover, we would get the goods at 1940 prices. It was a very good buy. The question was only how to get our 20 or 25 percent down payment. So I looked up Jacob Pat and I had a talk with David Dubinsky and with Sidney Hillman, and we got all the money. At that time it was said that it was a “loan” to the Norwegian labor movement, but it was never paid back. So we got a flying start when it came to building up the Labor press again after the War and that was of course very, very important.

Q: Did Joe Keenan have anything to do with that, because he had connections in Chicago?

LIE: No.

Q: It was just Dubinsky and Hillman?

LIE: Yes, they were always at logger-heads, but when it came to helping out in Norway, there was no “no.” But we could not have approached them without the help of Adolph Held. Adolph had friendly relations in both camps.

[Now, turning to the question of work in the] underdeveloped countries, I think we should start at the beginning, because it is in a way interesting. In 1950-1951, we were through with the big campaign on NATO and most of the rebuilding of our country was done. One day the Prime Minister got a letter from a “born-again Christian.” He was a member of the Labor Party and he wrote, “I have the feeling that we are now strong enough to help others. We are through with the period of reconstruction. We have had the help of the Americans to do it. Now we should help others.” The Prime Minister came to me at the Labor Party office and he said, “Haakon, here is a letter. You will have to answer it. It is addressed to me as Chairman of the Party and he is a party member. I don't want you to write only some kind words that we fully support the idea and so forth. You look into this.”

Q: Who was the Prime Minister at that time?

LIE: Einar Gerhardson. By that time President Truman had come out with the Point Four Program. My wife Minnie went to work on Point Four and the whole thinking about help to the underdeveloped countries. It happened that a Norwegian journalist dropped in at that time at the Labor Party office. He had made some money just after the War by publishing a magazine similar to “The Readers Digest,” and of course anything was sold that was printed. People wanted to read, read, read. Then he sold his publication. He had quite a bit of money and spent two years in India. Now he was back in Norway. I told him about the project, and he told me about the fishermen on the west coast of India in Kerala, how they were working and striving, and how they were exploited. I made a speech in one of the Labor Party clubs. It made a mighty impression. That weekend Trygve Lie was in Oslo, so it was a huge meeting.

Q: In his United Nations capacity?

LIE: Yes, by then he was the Secretary General. He described the work he was doing and also the work of the United Nations in the underdeveloped countries. The United Nations was now engaged there for the poorest of the poor. When Trygve Lie had spoken, the Chairman of the Labor Club got up and said, “I propose that the next meeting be devoted to aid to the underdeveloped countries.” Out of that came the Norwegian Government's Kerala Project. We worked in Kerala for at least 10 years building boats, ice factories and developing fishing. Then later Minnie and I were in Malta, helping to build a labor press. We were in Ankara, Turkey, for the same purpose. We were in Cyprus to help Turkish unions.

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Q: This is Morris Weisz and I am recording an interview with Haakon Lie, the former General Secretary of the Labor Party of Norway, who is an old friend from almost fifty years ago. The date is March 1, 1994, and we have had so far — reminisces of Haakon about the origin of Norwegian interest in American labor and how that developed into a close relationship between the Norwegian Labor Party and trade unions and those of the United States where many Norwegians had immigrated to and then returned to Norway. Mr Lie. has given us an outline of the relationship between labor, that is the Labor Party and trade union movements, the origin of their relationship to the United States and the impact that that origin had on the close cooperation with the Americans in the post-World War II period, the Marshall Plan, etc. He has also gone into aspects of the rather phenomenal interest of Norwegians in international aid efforts in the labor field and going quite a bit beyond the labor field. That is the substance of the important aspects of the interview, which I have not interrupted in order to get the flow of it from his own words and it will be reproduced as soon as we can get around to it in the form of a transcript, which Mr. and Mrs. Lie will edit so that it can be included in the material made available to Georgetown University, to the Foreign Service Institute in the State Department, to the

Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, under whose aegis this project is being conducted, and to both the Meany and Reuther Archives.

I now will first ask Mr. Lie to describe his birth, his family background, how he became involved in Norwegian Labor Party issues and the Labor Party's relationship to the trade unions.

Haakon, you were born in 190. . .

LIE: 1905. There was nothing special about my family background. I was born in Oslo in a typical worker's family. My father was a fire-fighter. We were five children and father and mother, living in one room and a kitchen. We were living at the fire station. At that time the fire-fighters were more or less forced to live at the station. They worked 72 hours per week. For a period of 24 hours, they had to stay at the telephone; they had the telegraph too. They also had horses to take care of. Then for another 24 hours each week they were tied to their station, and then another 24 hours when they could work around the station. They were very good carpenters. They were plumbers. They were in a sense a center for the surrounding streets. All the housewives came with their knives to get them sharpened. Their kids came with their skates to get them sharpened. When the housewives locked themselves out, the firemen had to go there and open the door for them. My father had a row of keys which hung from the ceiling down to the floor. All sorts of keys. He could break into any apartment. He could break into every safe. Q: How many families lived at that station?

LIE: There were probably less than 10 families.

Q: And you each had a separate apartment?

LIE: Yes, we lived in apartments there. Fire-fighters had to stay at the station 48 hours at a time and the following 24 they could go and do some other work. Father was always at work. I have seen letters Mother wrote to her own father and mother where she said,

“I am always alone.” The firemen were moved around from one station to another. It was not the life of an ordinary municipal worker. They had come to Oslo from the farms. They had big families and the ties between them were very close. I think they felt somewhat uncertain in the city. Mother came from a logging area, which was “as red as beef.” It was a tradition, and it still is a tradition. It is a area in which at least 60 percent of the voters are labor voters, today as in the past.

Q: When you say “red” what do you mean?

LIE: Socialist. Socialist. I had an uncle, Haakon. I was named after him. He was the Chairman of the Carpenters' Union for years and years. Another uncle, Thorsten, was the Chairman of the Brewery Workers' Union.

Q: These were your father's brothers?

LIE: No, my mother's brothers, and she was, of course, an honorary member of the Labor Party. You were brought up with the milk of your mother as a member of the Labor Party. When I was 15 years old, I joined the Socialist Youth League, and when I was 16, I joined the Labor Party. Then I was old enough to be in the party, and by chance I came into a group around the “grand old man of the Labor Party,” Martin Tranmael and Einar Gerhardson, who later was Prime Minister for 20 years. At that time of course we were rebels. I came into the movement just at the time when Martin Tranmael broke with the Comintern. We had entered the Comintern in 1919 by accident, but in 1921 when Lenin formulated what we called the “20 Theses,” the Moscow theses,. . .

Q: You had to accept every one of them.

LIE: Martin Tranmael rebelled, and then, from 1921 up until November 1923, we had the toughest fight inside the Labor Party for control of the party. (Pause) That fight was vicious. I think in a sense it was like a “religious war.” We were opposing the Holy City. The Moslems had their Holy City, Mecca; the Jews had Jerusalem; and the Communists

had their Moscow. And here we were standing up. They came to us: Bukharin, the favorite son of Lenin and the Party. He had lived in Oslo during the First World War, so he understood what we were saying, but he had to speak in German, while Martin Tranmael and the others spoke in Norwegian. That big man was all of the sudden a small dwarf. It was a fight involving every single branch of the party, every single labor newspaper, every single labor temple all over the country.

Q: Did you hear Bukharin?

LIE: Oh, yes.

Q: Was he as humanitarian as they now say he was in spite of the fact that he was a Leninist?

LIE: Yes, he was. I remember that he embraced Martin after having been defeated by Martin and said, “We love you, Martin. We respect you, Martin.” The Communists fought very hard because the Norwegian Labor Party was the only “mass” Labor Party inside the Comintern, and of course Norway was a bridge to the West. We had accessible borders, not common borders with the Soviet Union, but it was very easy to smuggle out literature, gold, all sorts of letters through Norway to the West during the blockade after the First World War.

Q: You said there was no common border? Didn't you have a common border up north?

LIE: At that time Finland extended up along the Norwegian border. After the Second World War, of course, Stalin took over that part of Finland.

So my up-bringing included that fight with the Communists, and I carried that heritage all through my life. When I got out of school, I wanted to be like my grandfather and his father and become a lumberjack. That was my dream: to leave Oslo. We were five children, three brothers. All three of us boys contracted tuberculosis. We were living there seven

people in one room and a kitchen. The parents had a double bed. The two girls had single beds, but the three boys were sleeping on one sofa. All three got tuberculosis. While I was lying there in the sanitarium, Martin Tranmael and my old friends in the Labor Party said, “Haakon, you should not become a lumberjack with your tuberculosis.” In 1929 I was put in charge of workers' education.

Q: You had no college or anything like that?

LIE: No. After this ruinous fight inside the labor movement, all educational activities had ceased. Nothing was left. So we started up and there were two of us. There was Aase Lionaes, who later became the Chairman of the Nobel Prize Committee, and who was a friend of Eleanor Roosevelt and Indira Gandhi. We were the two put in charge of workers' education financed then by the unions and the party. We experienced more or less an eruption in enrollment. There was unemployment at that time, and there had been no chance to go to schools to participate in educational programs. We started evening classes, weekend courses, summer courses. I think that in the first year we already had more than 10,000 students working with us in various correspondence courses. We also broadened our activities. We had 300 to 400 theater groups playing all over the country. We had to see to it that they had plays. We started making films. We started out with short 16 mm silent documentaries and moved into sound films lasting for an hour or one and a half hours. We were pioneers in Europe in labor films. We started a travel association. We started a publishing house. It's like a dream to go back and remember what happened in the 1930's.

Q: Were there any intellectual professors participating in this, or did you all do this on your own without any outside advice?

LIE: The big problem was textbooks. There were none, absolutely none. So we had to start writing our own manuals: How to conduct a meeting, how to write up minutes, and so

forth, the simplest things of all, and build up from there. We were talking earlier about the books children now read. There's a film tonight about Darwinism. . .

Q: The Origin of the Species.

LIE: That's right, and to me the Darwinian theory of evolution was the most radical of all in breaking with outmoded beliefs. I tried to find a Norwegian textbook on Darwinian evolution. It wasn't possible to find one. Then I got the help of a professor who was a member of the Labor Party.

Q: That's what I wanted to ask you. In the United States the workers' education field was helped by the intellectuals. Here yours grew out of your own efforts.

LIE: It did. In the big demonstration against fascism and war, we saw to it that we had the right colors and that new labor songs were made up. When the Civil War broke out in Spain, I was the first man to be sent there from Norway. “Go to Spain; see what we can do.” In the Finnish winter war, I was the first Norwegian to go to Finland. We were young. We were aggressive and we wanted to play an active part. So that's how it happened. When World War II came, I had to go to England; I had to go to America. Then in 1945 when we came back, I was elected Secretary of the Labor Party and held that post until 1969.

Q: You went to Spain. We had people going there from the American Communist movement, the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, and from the Socialist movement, the Eugene V. Debs Battalion or whatever they called it. It was there that some of our Socialist youth got their education and learned about what was being done by the Communists to the anarchists especially but also to the Socialists, the Caballero people. What was your reaction to what happened in the Spanish Civil War?

LIE: Well, we learned a lesson too, because we felt very close to the POUM, the Workers Party of Marxist Unity.

Q: The POUM-ists. This was the Trotskyist Fourth International group.

LIE: Yes! Among us was Willy Brandt, and he too learned a lesson in Spain about the behavior of the Communists.

Q: He was there from Germany?

LIE: No. From Norway. He was at that time already a Norwegian citizen.

Q: He was already in. . . Oh, he left during Hitler's (?)

LIE: He came to us in 1934 and became a citizen of Norway, so he went to Spain as a Norwegian in our relief activities. Now, Willy returned and knew more about the Communists. I remember I met Julius Deutsch. He had been the leader of the Schutzbund in 1934, when Dollfuss cracked down on the Austrian Socialists. He went to Prague, from Prague to Madrid. He was a general in the Republican Army, and he learned a lesson too in Spain about how the Communists behave.

Q: I should add to your comment on that that we Socialists in the United States did not have that education, and that most of our people were at that time in a cooperative relationship in a united front with the Communists for what we felt was the over-riding importance of giving medical aid to Spain. We were asked to discourage people who had seen Communists in action in Spain from testifying to Congress about what was going on there. That was our error, because we didn't have that education.

LIE: Well, that question never came up in Norway. When it came to recruiting people for the International Brigade, we did nothing. When I came back from Spain, I said, “They don't need soldiers. Soldiers just wait for the day when they can take over a machine gun from a dead soldier. It is not a question of manpower.” It was the Comintern that stood behind the international battalions and [those battalions] were of course blown up beyond their military value.

Q: What happened to your siblings, your brothers and sisters?

LIE: I lost two of them. Per was the youngest one. He was sent to Germany because of his underground trade union activities. He was picked up in 1942. He was declared an “NN Prisoner,” Nacht and Nebel, or night and fog. That meant you would die. You would not be killed, but you would die. He died in February 1945, just before the liberation in Dachau. My eldest brother was picked up, and he was interned in Fussb#tell; that was an ordinary prison in Hamburg. He came back, but his health was broken. And my two sisters, one died at 85 and the other at 90.

Q: And your parents? How long did they live?

LIE: Father died very early. He was as strong as a giant. He would take a bag with 100 kilos of flour and carry it up four stories to the attic. He could put his head on one chair and his heels on another and let a man sit in the middle. Muscles, muscles. Mother was a short little woman of Finnish extraction. She ran the house; she ran everything.

Q: What a remarkable family!

LIE: No, no, no.

Q: Not remarkable?

LIE: No, just toilers, as were my grandparents. They didn't know how to write. It's strange. My grandfather and I were good friends. When I started writing, — I was proud of my writing! — I came and showed him and there was no reaction. Then I understood. He couldn't write. I asked him, “Don't you know how to write? “No,” he said. “The teacher came and taught me how to read, and I know that of course. He promised to come back and teach me how to write, but he didn't come back.” He was born in 1844. At that time, the teachers went from one farm to the next. There were no schools, but they had

teachers wandering around. But he didn't come back. And grandmother never knew how to write either.

Q: Well, this is just fascinating! I have a number of questions. Let's begin with your earlier comment that you first came to the United States with a closer feeling towards the CIO than the AFL because the CIO's work was closer to the Wobblies, which was the background of so many of your people. . .

LIE: Industrial unionism.

Q: . . .and you did not have a friendly disposition toward the old AFL because they were conservative, so you chose to begin your contacts with the Jewish Labor Committee and the League for Industrial Democracy. As I recall your activities that I became aware of at that time, you maintained — instead of like many other people who tied themselves to one or the other, the AFL or the CIO — you managed to build contacts gradually with both. Dubinsky and Hillman were on opposite sides of fights, but somehow or other you maintained, because you restricted your activities to what was your business, not their business, you maintained contacts with both of them. How did you feel at the beginning in 1940 about the discussion of the Russians as our friends, we are with them during the war, we have to form a trade union organization that will not be separated by ideological factors, one big union for all the workers of the world, the WFTU? What was your reaction to that?

LIE: There was no problem. There had been a dispute inside the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU) as to whether we should bring in the Russians, and our line all the time was that we should try to get them in, because how could we defeat Nazi Germany without the help of the Red Army? That was of course also the feeling of Churchill, that you can't defeat Germany without the help of the Russians. And if we were to get the cooperation of the Russian Government, we must start with cooperation with the trade unions. For a long time, we hardly got any support, but we were always pressing for

this line inside the International. In 1938-1939, before the pact, the British changed their position and backed us. So inside the International we had the backing of the British.

Q: By "the International," do you mean the Socialist International or the IFTU?

LIE: What we called the "Amsterdam International" — the IFTU.

Q: You mean the International Federation of Trade Unions, Walter Schevenels and all those people?

LIE: Yes, that's right. So even before the war, we were advocates of cooperation with the Russian trade unions, in spite of the fight we had had with the Communist Party and the Comintern. So that wasn't my problem at all. I had already been in London one year, where of course the contacts had already been established with the Russian trade unions, when Schuernik (the Chairman of the Russian Federation of Trade Unions) came over with a delegation to visit the TUC.

Q: But this was after the pact.

LIE: This was in 1942, when Hitler attacked the Soviet Union.

Q: But at the time of the pact, with your history in Spain and the knowledge of what the Communists could do, in spite of that. . .

LIE: During the war we were preaching the gospel of cooperation with the Russians (as did President Roosevelt). I went to a CIO convention for the State of Washington in Seattle. I made a speech there and again advocated the need for cooperation with the Russians if we wanted to have a lasting peace. There should not be a repetition of what happened after the First World War. A representative of the CIO in California, a Communist, was very happy about that speech. He said, "Couldn't you come down to San Francisco?" I said, "Yes, I can, but I don't arrange my own schedule. Get in touch with the Norwegian Consul in San Francisco," because at that time the Norwegian Government in exile paid my travel

expenses. So he went down to San Francisco and tried to arrange some meetings, but Harry Bridges said no. Harry Bridges said, “We are suspicious of all those coming from the East.” So when I came to San Francisco, I made a speech to the Daughters of the American Revolution!

Q: What did he mean by saying, “we are suspicious of people coming from the East”?

LIE: It was a good joke. Of course, I was coming from New York.

Q: But he knew about your contacts.

LIE: He knew.

Q: He had political intelligence through the Communist movement.

LIE: You can be sure of that. He got in touch with people in New York and knew about the fight between the NMU (National Maritime Union) and the Norwegian Seamen's Union.

Q: And nobody said anything about being suspicious of people still further east in Moscow?

LIE: No. (end of tape) . . .Citrine came over to the United States. He got the CIO to cooperate with the Russians, so you had the TUC and the CIO and the Russians forming a committee of cooperation. Then the question came up about an international conference in 1945, where a new international labor confederation should be established. My job was to report also from America to our people in London, Stockholm and Oslo.

Q: To the Party and the trade unions and the Government?

LIE: At that time, we were not talking about the Party and the trade unions as separate bodies. It was the labor movement. We had then our headquarters in Oslo in the underground, and in Stockholm and in London.

Q: The labor movement irrespective. . .

LIE: Irrespective. I reported on developments in the American labor movement all the time I was here. I warned, “If we now push for a new international, it means that the American labor movement will be outside, because the main bulk of organized labor is in the AFL, not in the CIO. The big CIO figures are inflated. The hard core of American labor is AFL. So I was very skeptical about establishing a new trade union international.

Q: But you were speaking at meetings in favor of the unified. . .

LIE: On the basis of the old IFTU.

Q: But didn't that create problems for you from the AFL people who were so suspicious of that? How did you manage that?

LIE: That was no problem. Never. It was not a hot issue. Maybe in Socialist circles but not with Monroe Sweetland and the men and women engaged in the relief organizations.

Q: Not with Monroe Sweetland, but David Dubinsky? George Meany?

LIE: Well, George Meany at that time was not involved.

Q: That's right. It was Bill Green, who was the AFL President.

LIE: I remember I talked with Sidney Hillman about money for the labor press, and I brought up the question of cooperation with the Russians. He was lukewarm. It didn't mean a thing to him.

Q: That's interesting. Did you have any relations with John L. Lewis at all? LIE: I met him. I came back with the impression that he was a great actor, chewing his cigars. He didn't offer any kind of help. No. He was way above us. He didn't see us lowly Norwegians.
Q: So in 1945 the beginnings of the WFTU (World Federation of Trade Unions) were

established and the Norwegians joined in it, and before long there were the internal problems leading to the Marshall Plan break. How did that develop?

LIE: Yes, that was a part of the whole struggle inside the labor movement. Of course, the trade union internationals didn't mean very much to us. Internationals may mean something where unions are weak and need some help, but we were not in that situation. When it came to the Party, by the first summer after the War, we had the same membership as in 1939. And the labor press, there it was with a circulation bigger than in 1939. How? I don't know. So we were organizationally strong. When it came to the trade unions, the Nazis had kept some form of trade union activities going. We put the officers who had served under them in jail, and new officers took over.

Q: This was the great difference we found between re-establishing an industrial system in Western Europe, where you had the makings of it and it just had to re-grow, as against the developing countries, where you don't have the base.

LIE: Yes, it was remarkably smooth.

Q: A resurgence.

LIE: So many preparations had been made. I was called back and spent one winter, 1944, in London again. That winter I was writing the post-war program for the Labor Party. That was published with the help of the people working in the administration of the exiled Norwegian Government. So the political program was formulated and could be distributed in 1945. We got a flying start and were way ahead of all the bourgeois parties and could take over the Government immediately. We brought in a couple of Communists and some from the bourgeois parties into a coalition government. And in the general elections in the fall of 1945 we received a majority for the Labor Party.

Q: Then talking about the trade unions in the Marshall Plan period, before long the international political developments created the Cold War, and then you had to pull out of the WFTU.

LIE: Yes.

Q: What were those circumstances?

LIE: No problem.

Q: No opposition to pulling out?

LIE: Only the Communists, and at that time we had things under control. The big thing actually was that when we came back and the Communists were as strong as they were, we used their tactics. In a plant where they were strong, we picked out people whom we knew and could trust and sat with them for hours training them to fight and how to conduct meetings — and not leave the meetings.

Q: Don't leave the meetings to the Communists!

LIE: Yes, don't leave the meetings to them. We built up cadres of shop stewards from the various plants. The total membership of the Labor Party was around 160,000, and we had 30,000 registered shop stewards. That was the fist. That broke the back of the Communist Party. When they lost control of the local unions, they were finished. Then they started fighting among themselves. That helped.

Q: I don't know whether this is in the Kampelman interview [which he gave for our project], but that is precisely the type of organization that he built for Hubert Humphrey to win over the Farmer-Labor Party from the Communists in Minnesota. Fascinating story.

LIE: I have been branded as Norway's [Senator Joseph] McCarthy. We published handbooks on how to fight the Communists, and that was based on Professor Philip

Selznick's book, The Combat Party. We called ours The Cadre Party. I don't remember who was the Labor Attach# at that time, but he saw to it that we got the right to condense Selznick's book.

Q: About when was that?

LIE: 1954.

Q: Gene Martinson was Labor Attach# at that time.

LIE: Then Gene Martinson saw to it that we got the rights to the book. All the front organizations lined up in protest, and the book was branded as McCarthyism. I have a large volume of clippings about it.

Q: Well, within the CIO, they had the same thing. This McCarthyism was going on, but the CIO was conducting its own hearings on a fair basis to throw the Communists out.

Well, now I want to go to the question of the influence of Irving Brown, (the AFL European Representative living in Paris). You said you went to Paris, and found out what was going on there. You had your association with Irving Brown, whom you had already met, and I want to get your views on the problems of Marshall Plan aid going into Marseille. I should tell you that the Mayor of Marseille, whose name I forget, later became a member of Mitterrand's cabinet. It is said that before his death recently he said, “Well, you know, we could have beaten the Communists without Irving Brown. That was not a necessary part it. We could have won anyhow,” whereas your impression and mine is that no matter how uncomfortable it was to use bad elements to defeat the Communists who were trying to stop the Marshall Plan aid, it was a necessary part of the Marshall Plan effort. Do you have any comments on that?

LIE: No, I don't have, because I don't know the circumstances in Marseille or anything like that.

Q: Well, the allegation is that Irving Brown hired gangsters with Marshall Plan or CIA money. That's the allegation, and the response is that that would have been a necessary part of assuring France of the Marshall Plan aid. There was no other thing that they could have done.

LIE: I see, but as I say, I don't know anything about Marseille. But I was sitting there with Irving Brown during those exciting days in November/December 1947 when we didn't know whether the Republic of France would fall or not. He had contacts with the big factories in Paris, and people were coming to him and reporting on the situation here and there. It was exciting. And they were certainly not gangsters. They were old trade unionists brought up in the syndicalist movement. Every one of them was a personality. The way he operated was impressive. I have always said afterwards that Irving Brown was much better than his reputation. He was helpful if needed, and there is nothing more stupid than what Victor Reuther said in his book about the Reuther brothers, where he devoted a long chapter to the fight with Irving Brown. It spoiled the book. He should never have done it.

Q: Yes, there was animosity there. I don't know if I gave you a transcript of the interview that I did on the Marshall Plan in which I described the background of the Brown-Reuther relationships in the Automobile Workers Union before the war and later in the War Production Board. There was long-standing animosity there.

My last question is what you have done in your retirement, because I want references to the books so that students can see them. When did you retire?

LIE: 1969. Today it is compulsory to retire at 60. It's a mistake, but all trade union officers 60 years old, out they go. I was 65, and it was time to leave. I knew that I had to have something to do when I was through working for the Party. Otherwise, life would have been impossible. I bought a forest all the way up at the timber line, where no one wanted to work and no one ever had worked. I am very glad I did all that physical work with a chain saw felling trees. I had a big Russian tractor for hauling the timber. I kept going

as a lumberjack every summer until I was 80, but then my leg gave out. I had to give up logging. I didn't dare to use the chain saw, when I couldn't keep my balance. I gave the forest over to one of my girls. So that saved me in that transition period. Then we came into the period when the big question was: Should Norway join the Common Market or not? They asked me to take over the European Movement, so I worked then as the Secretary General for the European Movement until the Yom Kippur War.

Q: Now wait a minute. You said that you bought this property up at the timber line and worked as a lumber jack until 1982?

LIE: I worked it every summer from 1969 to 1985.

Q: But in between you took over the European Movement.

LIE: In the winter, I worked on the movement for the European Union, and that was a full time job in 1971 and 1972 and until the Yom Kippur War. In the fall of 1973, everything turned against Israel. We began a campaign in support of Israel. That was remarkable in a sense, because the Party refused to cooperate; the unions refused to cooperate; but it was a great success. I think mainly because we had the full support of the Christian fundamentalists. That's where the money came from.

Q: It was successful because of the Christian fundamentalists in Norway who believed so much in the State of Israel that they financed it?

LIE: They did. They helped us. I think we spent at least a year just campaigning for the State of Israel. Let me add that we commissioned Gallup polls when we were through with the campaign, and we could, of course, compare those polls with polls taken years earlier. We found that there was hardly any change in support for Israel.

Q: No diminution of the support. . .

LIE: There was only a diminution among young students at the universities. Among young workers, farmers, and so forth, there was hardly any change. That really was a relief. The drop in support for Israel came only with the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. The change was not so much in favor of the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization), as in disfavor of Israel. Support dropped. That was the turning point.

The Director of the Labor Party publishing house came to my home and asked me whether I would write. “No,” I said, “but later I decided to write a book, As I See It, which covers the last few years of my time as Secretary General of the Labor Party, including the decline of Labor Party strength. We lost power in 1965. The Labor Party lost the majority in an election of 1961 and a bourgeois Government was formed in 1965. 1969 was the last election campaign that I conducted as Secretary General of the Labor Party. In 1965 they took over. In 1969 we nearly took over, but we didn't succeed. We were 200 votes short in one county. Otherwise, we would have had the majority again. So I left with the best of conscience. I conducted the 1972 campaign on the referendum on the European Union. Then when the Yom Kippur War was over, I decided I should try to write a book. I worked on the book for probably one and a half to two years. It was an account of things that had happened. The former Prime Minister was furious on one point. He went on television and asked for time to respond. The result was that 70,000 copies were sold.

Q: In a population of how many?

LIE: Four million. Multiply by 60 to get the equivalent number in the United States. Then of course I wrote more.

Q: How many volumes was this As I See It?

LIE: That was one. That was the first one. Then I went on and described my first 20 years in the Labor Party (1920-40) — I was a revisionist then — from 1920, when I joined the

Party, up to 1940, when the war broke out. It was the first book with a critical view of the history of the Labor Party.

Q: Was it called a biography?

LIE: I called it, Loftrydding, (Clearing the Attic).

Q: Clearing the Attic. The reason I want to know the exact title is because I want to be able to refer to it, so that a person who reads Norwegian can get it out. It's at the Library of Congress, I assume.

LIE: That book covered up to 1940. In it the sensation was on how the Labor Government was divided on the question of rearmament against Germany. I had minutes and so forth which nobody else had previously used.

Q: Did you retain those minutes as your personal property or did you have them from the Party?

LIE: The Party files. The main thing was that I was allowed to go into the private archives of the Foreign Minister of that period. He was dead, and his daughter gave me permission to use his papers. He was a professor of history and for the sake of history, he made notes while he sat at Cabinet meetings.

Q: That was one volume?

LIE: That was book number two, Clearing the Attic. The third book was Krigstid (Wartime), In it I described what we have talked about today: the invasion of Norway, how I reacted. It ends up in San Francisco, where I was a Norwegian delegate to the conference establishing the United Nations. Then I wrote, and that is probably the best of the books from a historical point of view, Skjebne#r 1945-1951 (Fateful Years, 1945-1951). That's

the period with the Marshall Plan, NATO, and the fight with the Communists in Eastern Europe.

Q: So there are four volumes.

LIE: Then when the attitude of the Labor Party changed towards Israel and towards NATO, I wrote, . . . slik jeg ser det.2 (As I See It, Two). It sold more than 10,000 copies, so it served its purpose.

Q: What is the name of that book?

LIE: I used the same title I had used earlier, . . . slik jeg ser det.2 (As I See It, Two). Then I was wondering whether I should write a biography of my friend Aase Lionaes, the Chairman of the Nobel Peace Prize Committee. We started up, and all of a sudden she said, “No, Haakon, I don't want to go into this.” Today that work has been taken up by Doris Linder in San Francisco. She is of Swedish decent. She has written a big book about one of the pioneers of family planning. I saw that book manuscript. It has never been printed. I read the book and said, “Will you write the biography of Aase Lionaes?” and she said, “Yes.”

Q: Who is the subject of the biography?

LIE: Aase Lionaes. She was the Chairman of the Nobel Peace Prize Committee and first female speaker of the Norwegian Parliament.

Q: When did you start on the Tranmael book?

LIE: After Aase Lionaes said no, I started on the Tranmael book. It is a biography of 1000 pages. That was a big job.

Q: One volume?

LIE: Two volumes. Then we were preparing a TV show based on the biography of Martin Tranmael. The whole crew was at the Labor Archives, and there was Doris Linder. That was the first time that I met her. She came up to us and asked what we were doing. We told her that there was going to be a show about Martin Tranmael. She said, “Why don't you do a book on my countryman Andrew Furuseth?” I said, “Do you know anything about Andrew Furuseth?” Of course she knew SUP, San Francisco, and all the rest of it, and said she would be our guide in San Francisco.

Q: Wonderful!

LIE: Of course I knew about Andrew Furuseth before the war, because when he visited Oslo, he would see Martin Tranmael. But Martin always said, “Oh, that man is so conservative.” When I came to the old Labor Department Building on 14th Street in Washington and I entered the lobby, there was a bust of Mother Jones and a bust of Andrew Furuseth. For 50 years I have carried the image of that bust in my head. We decided we would do a biography. You saw that bunch of reviews of the book. It was partly nostalgia — the poor Norwegian farm boy going over there and doing well. The days when the labor leaderswere. . .

Q: And they slept on hard cots in the office.

LIE: It has had very good reviews, and that has been very satisfying.

Q: Now that is the book which I think should be published in English.

LIE: No. It is written from a Norwegian perspective. Hyman Weintraub has done a very good job in English. But of course he doesn't know anything about Furuseth's background. What he writes about his youth is of little value.

Q: How big is this book and what is it called?

LIE: It is called, En Sj#mans Saga — Havets Abraham Lincoln (A Seaman's Saga — The Abraham Lincoln of the Sea).

Q: And what is your next project, Haakon?

LIE: I intended to write on why there is now a decline in union membership in all industrialized countries except Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Norway. Sweden now has 80 percent of those employed in unions. The Finns are nearly at the same level. The Danes have the same level. But America has a decline to 16 percent. And unions are membership in Germany and in Great Britain. Britain had 13 million; they are now down to nine million.

Q: I look forward to receiving the answer.

LIE: No, I gave up the project.

Q: Haakon, thank you very much. I enjoyed this interview. I think it will be of great value to our project.

End of interview